

## North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- ✓ The purpose of the EIS is to determine how the federal agencies will work to restore grizzly bears to the ecosystem.
- ✓ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service (NPS) are the leads for this EIS process.
- ✓ WDFW is a Cooperating Agency (CA).  
CA status does not imply support for or opposition to specific recovery strategies.
- ✓ The scope of WDFW's role as a CA is:
  - Cooperating and assisting in the scoping process.
  - Assisting the FWS and NPS in developing the plan/EIS by providing technical assistance in those areas for which WDFW has special expertise or jurisdiction by law, by evaluating the potential alternatives, impacts, and mitigation effectiveness in the plan/EIS.
  - Identifying issues to be addressed in the plan/EIS; providing necessary resource, environmental, social, economic, and institutional data; and assist in developing and evaluating alternatives.
  - Provide necessary information to be included in the decision file for the preparation of the NEPA document; ensure SEPA requirements are addressed.

The EIS process and grizzly bear recovery is challenging for WDFW due to an existing state law directing that WDFW may only use bears native to the state for management. See below:

**RCW 77.12.035: Protection of grizzly bears -- Limitation on transplantation or introduction --  
Negotiations with federal and state agencies.**

*The commission shall protect grizzly bears and develop management programs on publicly owned lands that will encourage the natural regeneration of grizzly bears in areas with suitable habitat. Grizzly bears shall not be transplanted or introduced into the state. Only grizzly bears that are native to Washington State may be utilized by the department for management programs. The department is directed to fully participate in all discussions and negotiations with federal and state agencies relating to grizzly bear management and shall fully communicate, support, and implement the policies of this section.*

- ✓ WDFW is directed to “fully participate in all negotiations” and can effectively participate as long as the EIS evaluates all options for achieving recovery in the North Cascades, including how challenges to those alternatives may be addressed. The statute is clear, however, that if the EIS results in the reintroduction of grizzly bears into Washington from out of state, WDFW cannot participate in that particular action. However, if grizzly bears were to be reintroduced, WDFW is responsible for the conservation of all grizzly bears in the state and would also likely need to respond to any reports of bears that are endangering public safety or damaging private property.

Grizzly Bear Management Info:

- ✓ Federally listed under the Endangered Species Act as Threatened (1975), State Endangered (1980)

- A proposal to federally “up list” the Selkirk and North Cascades Distinct Population Segment from Threatened to Endangered was found to be warranted but precluded (1998 & 1999)
- ✓ Washington has historically had grizzly bears in the Selkirks and in the North Cascades. There are a small number of bears in the Selkirks and many fewer have been documented in the North Cascades in the last 20 years. See the Draft Periodic Status Review (2018) for more details: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01963/>.
- ✓ WDFW is committed to the recovery of grizzly bears in Washington and has been an active participant with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. We have also been working on outreach and education, sanitation efforts, monitoring populations and other recovery implementation activities.

#### Current EIS Progress:

- ✓ Feb 2015: The Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register by the lead federal agency and signals the initiation of the process.
- ✓ March 2015: Scoping, an open process involving the public and other federal, state, tribal, and local agencies, identified the major and important issues for consideration during the process.
- ✓ April 2015- December 2016:
  - Lead and cooperating agencies developed and reviewed alternatives for the draft EIS.
  - The alternatives for implementing grizzly bear recovery included the potential for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate any reintroduced population in the North Cascades a 10(j) non-essential experimental population, which would provide managers with increased flexibility, in order to help to ensure grizzly bear restoration does not result in the restriction of other land uses and resource development activities or compromise public safety.
- ✓ January 13<sup>th</sup> 2017: The draft EIS provides a detailed description of the proposal, the purpose and need, reasonable alternatives, the affected environment, and presents analysis of the anticipated beneficial and adverse environmental effects of the alternatives. After release of the draft a formal comment period and public meetings followed to receive comments from the public and other agencies. The comment period was open until April 28, 2017.
- ✓ At Present: The NPS and USFWS are working through the public comments received and plan to have a final EIS issued by the end of 2018. The final EIS will address the comments on the draft and identify, based on analysis and comments, the "preferred alternative".
- ✓ Approximately end of 2018: After the final EIS is complete, a record of decision is signed by the NPS and USFWS thereby allowing the selected alternative to be implemented.